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TOP SECRET 242010Z OCT 72 SENSITIVE EXCLUSIVELY
EYES ONLY VIA BUNKER CHANNEL

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DELIVER OPENING OF BUSINESS

WHS2293

DOS Review Completed.

OCTOBER 24, 1972

FOR: AMBASSADOR BUNKER

FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER

AT THIS STAGE, WE CAN PERHAPS GAIN TWO OR THREE WEEKS DELAY WITH AN HEROIC EFFORT. THE DELAY, HOWEVER, WILL MAKE CHANGES IN THE TEXT MORE DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE SINCE WE WILL MOST LIKELY HAVE TO MAKE FIRM PROMISE THAT NEXT GO-AROUND WILL BE THE FINAL ONE. THIEU MUST UNDERSTAND THAT HIS ALTERNATIVES REALLY REVOLVE AROUND ACCEPTING WHAT IS GOOD IN THE OFFER OR IN PERSISTING IN AN INTRANSIGENT POSITION WHICH WILL SURELY RESULT IN A CUT-OFF OF U.S. FUNDS THROUGH CONGRESSIONAL ACTION IF NOT FROM US. THUS, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT HE NOT DIG A HOLE FOR HIMSELF BY PORTRAYING THIS WEEK'S ACTIVITIES AS A MAJOR CONFRONTATION RATHER THAN AN ESSENTIAL ROUND OF CONSULTATION AND DISCUSSION BETWEEN US. IF, AS IT NOW APPEARS, THIEU CLAIMS THAT THE COUNCIL OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION IS IN FACT THE COALITION, THEY ARE COMMITTING SUICIDE. WE CAN, OF COURSE, TOLERATE A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF DOMESTIC POSTURING ON THIEU'S PART WHICH WILL ENABLE HIM TO ULTIMATELY CLAIM A VICTORY, BUT IF THESE TACTICS ARE INDEED BASED ON A MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE NATURE OF THE PROPOSED POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OR AN INTENTIONAL DISTORTION DESIGNED TO PROVIDE THE BASE FOR CONTINUED INTRANSIGENCE, IT CAN ONLY WORK TO THIEU'S ULTIMATE DISADVANTAGE. IN THIS CONTEXT, THIEU MUST REMEMBER THAT EVERYTHING HE GAINS IN SOUTH VIETNAM AS A RESULT OF THESE TACTICS HE LOSES HERE IN THE UNITED STATES WHERE HE NEEDS CONTINUED MILITARY AND ECONOMIC SUPPORT.

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE
INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

IT IS ALSO ESSENTIAL THAT THIEU PROVIDE US WITH SOME IDEA OF THE ULTIMATE OUTCOME SO THAT WE CAN BEGIN TO MOVE THE REPLACEMENT MATERIAL. OTHERWISE, WE MAY FIND OURSELVES UP AGAINST AN IMPRACTICAL DEADLINE. THIEU SHOULD REMEMBER THAT TO THE DEGREE THAT HE CAN APPEAR TO BE A GOOD PARTNER HIS SUPPORT WILL BE UNLIMITED. IF, HOWEVER, HE PERSISTS IN FIGHTING US, NO MATTER WHAT THE CONCESSIONS HE GETS IN WHAT IS NOW ESSENTIALLY A VERY WORKABLE FORMULA WILL IN NO WAY BE A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE ULTIMATE COLLAPSE OF AMERICAN SUPPORT FOR HIM.

YOUR APPROACH IN THE DAYS AHEAD SHOULD BE REGULAR AND CONTINUING CONTACTS WITH THIEU AND LAM, WITH THE VIEW TOWARD IMPRESSING UPON THEM IN A MEASURED WAY THE URGENCY OF ACCEPTING THE REALITY OF THE ULTIMATE OUTCOME. AS YOU POINT OUT IN YOUR 0233, THIEU MAY BE INVOLVED IN CREATING A STRAWMAN THAT HE CAN ULTIMATELY BEAT TO DEATH. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE MAY ACTUALLY ERRONEOUSLY BELIEVE THAT THE COUNCIL REPRESENTS A COALITION. IN EITHER EVENT, PERSISTENT PUBLIC ATTACKS ON THIS THESIS COULD CREATE A GROUND SWELL OF OPPOSITION HERE WHICH WE WOULD BE FORCED TO COUNTER AT THE COST OF CONTINUED U.S. DOMESTIC SUPPORT WHICH WOULD ULTIMATELY PROVE FATAL TO THE GVN.

WARM REGARDS.

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